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ABSTRACT

As part of a series of publications reporting the promising practices gleaned from pre-elementary Right to Read programs, this manual is designed to provide pertinent information regarding young children and reading. It covers such topics as the skills necessary for reading acquisition, how children acquire these skills, and the importance of reading to young children. Included in the manual is a bibliography of children's books. (RL)

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Development of Pre-Reading Skills

A Theoretical Perspective

Manual I

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
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U.S. Department of Education
Shirley Hufstedler, Secretary

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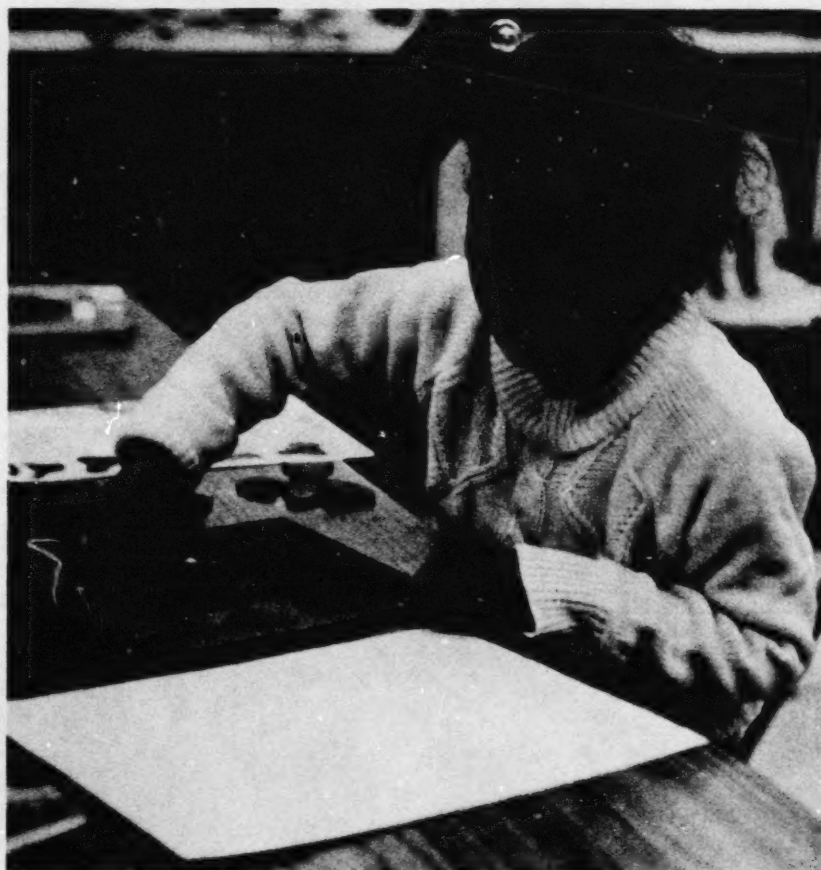
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THE PROCESS OF LEARNING TO READ

Reading acquisition necessitates the mastery of varied developmental skills and abilities. While there is general agreement about the necessary skills, there are many views about how and when children develop these skills, and how, when, and if reading should be taught.

This paper will briefly focus on both aspects. It will present the author's perception of the skills that are necessary for reading acquisition and will discuss the cognitive-developmental view regarding the development of these skills in children and the role of adults in this skills acquisition process. For ease of reading, the paper will be divided into two sections: (1) Readiness skills necessary for reading acquisition; (2) How children acquire these skills.



Skills Necessary for Reading Acquisition

Children, to become effective readers, must be able to:

- See a clear and unblurred image on a white field and hear the sounds of letters and words.
- Distinguish one symbol from another and recognize these differences consistently.
- Remember the sounds or images of the symbols in sequence.
- Relate these symbols to meaning based on experience and synthesize the visual and auditory clues with the meaningful words for integrative learnings.
- Do all of these things smoothly and with reasonably efficient speed. (Mann, Suiter, 1974).

Doing, "all these things smoothly," requires the mastery of developmental skills in a variety of areas.



Pre-Reading Skills:

Visual

Binocular control: The act of reading demands a high degree of *binocular control*—two eyed coordination—in maintaining attention on a line from left to right. Without good binocular coordination learning to read accurately is difficult (Spache, 1976). Children are not born with binocular control, it has to be developed. Activities to develop binocular skills include:

- Walking beam and variations: Indian walk, Butterfly, Backward Walk, and Learning Distances.

Ocular motility: The act of reading also necessitates the development of *ocular motility*—eye movements needed to visually examine the individual details of an object to include: distinguishing light from no light, seeing fine detail, binocular fusion, convergence and scanning (Mann, Suiter, 1974). Ocular motility exercises assist in relieving visual tension and tiredness from working at desk level. Activities to develop ocular motility include:

- Distance viewing: using both eyes independently at far points. Place four cards, with large numerals, on walls at four corners of the room. Have child place folded sheet of paper edgewise to his/her nose. With both eyes open, child looks at numbers and calls them.
- Visual tracking: Suspend an object at child's eye level. Swing object to and fro and have child follow it with his/her eyes.

Visual memory: The ability to recall something that has been seen, or visual memory, is crucial to the reading process. The act of reading involves visual recall of letters, words, etc. Activities to develop the child's

ability to visually recall an item, object, or word include:

-Slowly print a word or group of letters on black board or easel. Then, as children cover their eyes remove one letter. Have children identify what's missing (Spache, 1976).

-Illustration: Make flash cards of familiar words. Show these to the children and have them recall as many words as they can remember.

Visual Motor

Discrimination of forms and shapes that constitute letters is based on the body, hand and eye experiences of the child (Spache, 1976). Up-down, front-back, near-far, high-low, left-right discriminations are first learned in the muscles. During the first years of life the child learns to translate these muscular cues of distance, directionality, size, and shape into visual cues. The child moves slowly from the circle, to the cross, to the straight line, to the square, to the diagonal line, to size, and to directionality. Only when this development is advanced can the child begin to apply these cues to the process of reading. Activities to train this developmental process include:

Body coordination exercises:

-Balance Disc: Have child maintain balance while bending knees, turning around, or executing other movements (Spache, 1974).

-Ladder: Make likeness of ladder on the floor with chalk or tape. Have children do: Hopping exercises, Duck Walk, All fours, Walk around frame—one foot in front of the other, and Jump Rope exercises.

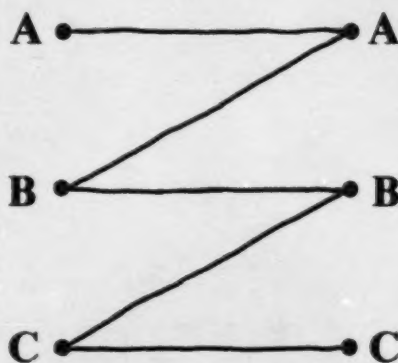
Directionality:

-Holding Exercise: Give children a small easy-to-hold object. Give oral directions for them to hold object in different positions—e.g. between your knees, over your head, etc.

-Have child place chair in various locations in the room: e.g. under the table.

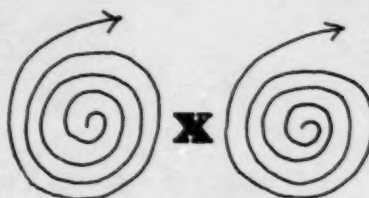
Unimanual exercises (exercises using one hand):

-Paper-pencil activity: Make two rows of dots across the paper. Alphabetically label each row of dots. The child draws an unbroken line joining the dots.



Bimanual exercises (exercises using both hands):

-Draw an X — (fixation point) on the child's paper or chalkboard. Provide child with two pencils or pieces of chalk. Starting one inch from the right and one inch from the left of the X, have child make simultaneous circle patterns.



Variations include bimanual straight lines, and connecting circular dots. Have children work clockwise and counter-clockwise.

(Spache, 1974).

Small muscle development activities:

Prior to learning to read and write, children need to experience a variety



of small muscle activities. A few of these include:

- Cutting
- Putting clothespins on a line
- Squeezing clay and other soft objects
- Using pegs, tinkertoys, lego
- Manipulating small blocks, Lincoln logs

Visual Discrimination

"Progress in the continuum from muscular learning to visual learning means moving toward the fine discriminations demanded by letters and words. The ability to read and write the symbols of language we call visual discrimination" (Spache, 1976). The developmental stages of visual discrimination include:

- form discrimination
- three dimensional materials
- use of paper and pencil in two-dimensional reproduction and matchings.

Consequently, the ability to understand and discriminate between shapes and forms is closely related to the ability to read. The following are some of the activities that aid in the development of visual discrimination skills:

Form Discrimination

-Draw a basic shape on a piece of manila art paper and have children

make as many objects as they can from it.

In a discussion of shapes have children look around the room and compare the shapes to one that you are holding in your hands.

Shape Discrimination

-Shape bingo: Make a set of Bingo Cards each containing four circles, four triangles, four squares, four rectangles. Make a set of flash cards with one shape on each card. Make enough flash cards so that you would have one color each of each shape. Play Bingo—be sure you have small prizes for the winner.

Color Discrimination

-Hold up a piece of construction paper. Say to child—"If you are wearing something this color, stand up."

-Color Lotto (Same as letter lotto but use colors)

Letter Discrimination

-Letter Lotto: Using white poster board (15" x 12") make bold upper case letters in black thick point magic marker. For durability, cover with clear contact paper. Make individual letters, identical to the ones on the lotto board—again, cover with clear contact paper. Play Lotto. Several dif-

LETTER LOTTO

A	D	J	G
I	L	E	M
F	B	Z	H
Y	W	X	N

ferent boards can be made by varying the letters included on the board.

This game can be varied and made more difficult by using lower case letters, or by combining lower and upper case letters.

Auditory Discrimination

Discriminating letter sounds and words is crucial to the act of learning to read. The child must discriminate auditory cues to letters and words—pitch, loudness, duration, and rhythmic patterns. Auditory skills are also essential to phonic and structural analysis—the child must be able to discriminate the pitches of letter sounds and inflection; the loudness that determines accent, the duration of the sounds of vowels and consonants.

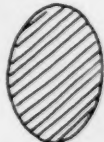
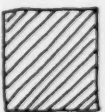
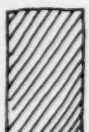
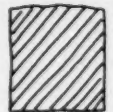
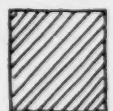
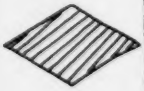
Listening skills are also related to success in reading. Listening is not a natural skill; it must be developed.

Auditory memory and discrimination

-Children pretend they are in a cave where echoes are heard. The leader makes various sounds, words, etc. The children repeat each one using the same inflections, pitch, etc. (Spache, 1976).

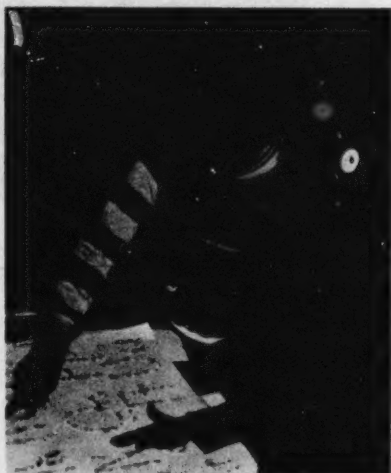
-Do What I do: Teacher claps hands once, twice, thrice, etc. Children repeat.

SHAPE BINGO

				
				
		FREE		
				
				

-Simon Says

-Record a collection of sounds on tape recorder. Have children listen and identify the sounds.



Tactile Discrimination

Some children have difficulty associating visual symbols with words. Children can be aided in recalling the visual symbol for a word by associating its tactile properties with the written symbol. Some children are helped by tracing over the letters and words. Others profit from feeling and handling objects. Activities to assist in the development of tactile discrimination skills are:

-Clay letters: using modeling clay have children roll out long strips. Using the strips they form their names or other letters and words.

-Feeling Boxes: place several items in a box. Make a hole in the top big enough for a child's hand to go through. Have children identify the objects by feeling.

-Sand-Paper and wooden letters: have children manipulate letters, feel them, turn them, trace them, etc.

How Children Acquire Reading Skills

Reading acquisition is, essentially, a language acquisition and cognitive process. Traditionally, two theoretical viewpoints regarding language acquisition have been stressed. These viewpoints make assumptions about how children learn and about the nature of knowledge. The maturational view simply says wait until the child is ready. The behavioral view says start, but be careful how you start—start simple (Schickedanz, 1978). Both views lead the reader to conclude that the young child is incapable of comprehending much if anything about the reading process. According to Schickedanz, 1978, the behavioral theory says—knowledge is “out there” and we must funnel it into children. The maturational view is subject to two basic interpretations: (1) knowledge is internal, and we must wait until it comes out; (2) knowledge is external, but, we must wait until internal structures are mature enough to deal with the knowledge. In both cases, the child is not seen as being very active in the whole process: in one, the child is controlled by the whims of the nervous system; in the other, the child is controlled by the arrangement of stimuli in the external environment.

Schickedanz, et. al, 1978 proposes an alternative to these views, one based on Jean Piaget's cognitive/developmental theory of learning. The cognitive/developmental view is an interactionist one, in which the child is seen as being endowed with abilities that enable him to construct knowledge. Knowledge does not reside in the external environment or in the child's nervous system, rather, knowledge is constructed through interaction between the child and his environment.

The word interaction connotes involvement with experiences. This means that appropriate environmental experiences—people and things—must be abundantly available for the child. The role of the adult then becomes a rather crucial dual role: (1) construct an environment that is rich in language/reading materials; (2) be available to the child; be a model; interact with the child; provide rich and relevant experiences for the child; pick up cues from the child in order to ask and answer questions.

Schickedanz, 1978, influenced by the cognitive/developmental theory, developed and implemented various teaching strategies. Based on her observations of the children, she suggests a series of hierarchical steps through which children pass in the very early stages of learning to read.

1.10 • How Children Acquire Reading Skills

Hierarchical Steps	Meaning in terms of theory
Children read by looking at pictures and "making up" words.	At this point children do not yet understand that print not pictures tell the story, or that representations (print) are conventional in nature. They use "real words" to tell the story but use words that are different from those actually in the book. They do associate pictures with certain story ideas.
Children go through several "no read" points at the transitions between reading by "making up" and reading "by heart".	At each point the child's idea of what reading is changes, and s/he is unwilling to "read" as before. At these points the child wants the adult to read until the point where s/he has enough new information to strike out again on his/her own. These are stages of realizations that lead to "no response" or "I can't read" or "you read".
Children read by paraphrasing <i>actual</i> story.	Children first realize that you can't make up a story—each book tells a specific story.
Children read "by heart".	Children next realize that you can't tell the story in your own words, that you must use actual words in the book. At this point they may slow down or stop and ask questions about certain words in the book.
Children read "by sight".	Children realize that you must <i>really</i> look at print and read words. They can transfer knowledge about phonology and orthography to words previously learned. They can decode new words. At this point children are really reading.

Taking these steps into consideration, the story reading situation—adult reading a story to a child, child "reading" to the adult—is crucial to the reading acquisition process. Although the steps outlined here are explained in terms of the cognitive/developmental theory, the traditional viewpoints also stress the importance of story reading to the child's later ability to learn to read but for very different reasons. It is because of these differences that the proponents of the traditional viewpoints have been comfortable with reading to children in larger groups, and not really encouraging individual reading.

Sources:

Mann, P.H. and Suiter, P. *Handbook in diagnostic teaching: A learning disabilities approach*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1974.

Schickedanz, J. and Rossman, P. *How our notions about reading acquisition influence what we think young children know about reading*. Paper presented at the NAEYC Conference, New York, 1978.

Spache, E. *Reading activities for child involvement* (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1976.

THE IMPORTANCE OF READING TO YOUNG CHILDREN

The words, "Children who learn to read easily in school are the same children whose parents have read to them at home," have been written and said repeatedly. Often we accept this statement at face value—it makes such good sense—very rarely do we ask "why"?

Let us explore the relationship between story reading and later achievement. Let us look at the relationship by drawing upon three theories of learning: Learning theory or "the readiness" view; the cognitive/developmental theory or "the child constructs knowledge" view and the language explanation/book knowledge view.



Learning Theory: The Readiness View

What the Theory Says

Modeling: Children model parents behavior, if parents read to children, or read in the presence of their children, their children will try to read.

Positive Reinforcement: Children get a lot of positive reinforcement when parents read to them—attention, verbal praise, hugs. Learning to read then becomes a way to maintain reinforcement.

"I can do it": Story reading is usually a warm, secure time for children. Consequently, children feel good about the reading situation and are able to approach it with confidence.

What the Theory Means

Motivation and reinforcement derived *externally* from the learning act itself are important. Additionally, story reading serves as preparation for instruction in reading that is to occur later; the story reading situation itself is not viewed as one key instructional setting in which learning to read will occur.

The story reading situation is extremely beneficial because it makes the child receptive to, and motivated for, actual reading instruction that will take place when the child enters school.

Cognitive Developmental Theory: The Child Constructs Knowledge View

What the Theory Says

Scheme I: Memorized Story Line

The reader makes the story line accessible to the child. When the same story is read repeatedly the child learns it "by heart". This is the development of the cognitive scheme that story lines can be remembered. The child develops strategies for remembering story lines.

Scheme II: Locating Print in Books: The story reading situation helps the child locate print in books. They learn to associate pictures with certain words and to recognize words. Thus children learn to read "by sight"—they first recognize what the printed words say or mean, then recognize how the words look.

Scheme III: Matching Letters and Sounds—Once the child knows the story "by heart" and then "by sight", s/he can observe letters—sound correspondence—realize there is a pattern in the correspondence between letters and sounds. Consequently, reading, using phonics rules integrated with other strategies, begins to occur.

What the Theory Means

This explanation focuses on the story reading situation as a source from which the child constructs knowledge about the roles of the reading process. The child is an active participant in the entire process. Children are assumed to be internally motivated and be able to construct knowledge. Learning is a hierarchical process. In the process of acquiring knowledge about reading from the story reading situation, the child develops schemes that become increasingly more complex as learning progresses. The schemes quite naturally take time and experience to develop. In terms of reinforcement, this model purports that the child does not participate in activities for the external reinforcement, i.e. praise and attention, but because s/he finds the activity interesting.

Knowledge of phonemes is abstract. Children must construct such knowledge for experiences in which they are confronted with trying to match speech to print.

Language Explanation Theory: Book Knowledge View

What the Theory Says

Language Development: The language learned from the story reading process and ensuing discussion makes it easier for children to learn to read. Hence, the reading process is viewed as a language prediction process.

Book Knowledge: Children learn basic concepts when they are exposed to story reading and to books—concepts such as, left to right progression, i.e., print, is read from left to right; books have beginnings and endings.

What the Theory Means

Reading is, primarily, a language process. Although this view admits that children learn something from the story reading process itself, this aspect is not stressed. Rather, it is mentioned but authors stress that story reading at the pre-elementary level is, primarily for fun.

To the degree in which this explanation admits that children acquire knowledge from books, this theory is consistent with the cognitive developmental theory.

If story reading is so important to the reading acquisition process, then the responsibility for reading to children should be assumed jointly by parents and teachers. Additionally, for story reading to be fully effective, certain techniques should be followed. Based on the cognitive-developmental model, Schickedanz, 1978, proposes the following techniques:

- Story reading should take place in a situation that allows the child to see the print in the book. Consequently, stories should be read to no more than two or three children at a time.
- Turning the pages of the book may help children learn the phrasing of the story. Give children the opportunity to turn the pages.
- Read the same story to children many times—repetition is required for the construction of the story line. The amount of repetition necessary for individual children to construct the lines of a particular story varies. It would be important then, to pay close attention to children's pleas to hear a particular story and to read it again.
- Adults should point out where in the book words that "say" what

they are reading appear. Adults should also pose occasional questions to the children, such as, "Where do you think it says, 'MEOW!' on this page?"

-Listening posts may be used most effectively when children have individual books of the stories they hear to follow along in.

-Children would need free access to books that are read to them, in addition to the story reading time itself. Such access would be critical for children to practice matching their "by heart" story lines with printed words, and for integrating their "by heart" and "by sight" versions to abstract

rules about letter sound associations.

-Observation lists should be used to keep records of children's progress.

-Adults should encourage children to compose stories that the adult can write down. These stories would be easy for children to read "by heart" because they composed them.

Source:

"Please Read That Story Again"
Exploring Relationships Between Story Reading and Learning to Read
Judith A. Schickedanz, Ph.D., Pre-Elementary Right-to-Read Program, Boston University



A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Books always have been our primary source of information. The lives of all human beings are enriched through books. Research has shown that children, who are introduced to books at an early age, and who are exposed to an environment that is rich in books and other reading materials, usually become very proficient readers.

The following bibliography includes a variety of books for pre-elementary children in several areas. This bibliography is limited. Other sources that would be helpful for parents, teachers, and administrators are:

1. Children's Book Council, Inc.
Children's Books: Awards and Prizes. 67 Irving Place, New York 10003, 1977.
2. Sutherland, Z. *Children and Books*. Scott Foresman and Company, Glenview, Ill. 1977



Caldecott Medal Award Winners

Each year since 1938, a medal known as the Caldecott medal is awarded to the artist selected for making the best illustrations for children's books. The award is presented at the annual meeting of the National Library Association.

The following is a list of award winners:

Author	Award Winner	Title	Year
Asimov, I.	Lathrop, D.	<i>Animals of the Bible</i>	1938
Handforth, T.	Handforth, T.	<i>Mei Li</i>	1939
D'Aulaire, I.M.	D'Aulaire, I.M.	<i>Abraham Lincoln</i>	1940
Lawson, R.	Lawson, R.	<i>They were strong and good</i>	1941
McCloskey, R.	McCloskey, R.	<i>Make way for ducklings</i>	1942
Burton, L.	Burton, L.	<i>The little house</i>	1943
Thurber, J.	Slobodkin, L.	<i>Many moons</i>	1944
Field, R.L.	Jones, E.O.	<i>Prayer for a child</i>	1945
Petersham, M.T.	Petersham, M.T.	<i>The rooster crows</i>	1946
Brown, M.W.	Weisgard, L.	<i>The little island</i>	1947
Tresselt, A.R.	Duvoisin, R.	<i>White snow, bright snow</i>	1948
Hader, B.H.	Hader, B.H.	<i>The big snow</i>	1949
Politi, L.	Politi, L.	<i>Song of the swallows</i>	1950
Milhous, K.	Milhous, K.	<i>The egg tree</i>	1951
Lipkind, W.	Mordvinoff, N.	<i>Finders keepers</i>	1952
Ward, L.K.	Ward, L.K.	<i>The biggest bear</i>	1953
Bemelmans, L.	Bemelmans, L.	<i>Madelin's rescue</i>	1954
Perrault, C.	Brown, M.	<i>Cinderella</i>	1955
Langstaff, J.M.	Rojankovsky, T.	<i>Frog went a 'courtin</i>	1956
Udry, J.M.	Simont, M.	<i>A tree is nice</i>	1957
McCloskey, R.	McCloskey, R.	<i>Time of wonder</i>	1958
Chaucer, G.	Cooney, B.	<i>Chanticleer and the fox</i>	1959
Ets, M.H.	Ets, M.H.	<i>Nine days to Christmas</i>	1960
Robbins, R.	Sidjakov, N.	<i>Baboushka and the three kings</i>	1961
Brown, M.W.	Brown, M.W.	<i>Once a mouse</i>	1962
Keats, E.J.	Keats, E.J.	<i>The snowy day</i>	1963
Sendak, M.	Sendak, M.	<i>Where the wild things are</i>	1964
De Regniers, B.S.	Montresor, B.	<i>May I bring a friend?</i>	1965
Leodhas, S.N.	Hogrogian, N.	<i>Always room for one more</i>	1966
Ness, E.	Ness, E.	<i>Sam, Bangs, and moonshine</i>	1967
Emberley, B.	Emberley, B.	<i>Drummer Hoff</i>	1968
Ransome, A.	Shulevitz, U.	<i>The fool of the world and the flying ship</i>	1969
Steig, W.	Steig, W.	<i>Sylvester and the magic pebble</i>	1970
Haley, G.E.	Haley, G.E.	<i>A story, a story</i>	1971
Hogrogian, N.	Hogrogian, N.	<i>One fine day</i>	1972
Mosel, A.	Lent, B.	<i>The funny little women</i>	1973
Zemach, M.	Zemach, M.	<i>Duffy and the devil</i>	1974
McDermott, G.	McDermott, G.	<i>Arrow to the sun</i>	1975
Aardema, V.	Dillon & Dillon	<i>Why mosquitoes buzz in people's ears: a West African Tale</i>	1976
Musgrane, M.	Dillon & Dillon	<i>Ashanti to Zulu: African traditions</i>	1977
Wiesner, W.	Spier, P.	<i>Noah's Ark</i>	1978
Gable, P.	Gable, P.	<i>The girl who loved wild horses</i>	1979
Hall, D.	Hall, D.	<i>Ox-Cart man</i>	1980

Multi-Ethnic Literature

1. Africa: *An annotated list of printed materials suitable for children*. U.S. Committee for UNICEF, New York, 1968.
2. Alexander M. *Bobo's dream*. Dial Press, New York, 1970.
3. *Children's books about Asian art*. Docent Council, DeYoung Museum, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, Cal. 9418.
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